



**Confederated Tribes and Bands  
Of the Yakama Nation**

**Established by the  
Treaty of June 9, 1855**

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August 7, 2002

Steve Wright  
Administrator  
Bonneville Power Administration  
905 NE 11<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232

Re: Wind Farm Development within the Ceded Lands of the Yakama Nation

Dear Mr. Wright:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Maiden Wind Farms proposed development. This proposed wind farm is located within the Ceded Area of the Yakama Nation as identified in the Treaty of 1855 between the Yakama Nation and the U. S. Government. In the Treaty of 1855 the Yakama Nation allowed non-Yakama settlement within the Ceded Area, but retained certain very important rights. Among the retained rights are those relating to the cultural and spiritual practices of the Yakama People. When activities or developments are proposed that may affect the practice of these retained rights in the Ceded Area, the Yakama Nation becomes strongly concerned.

Recently there have been a large number of wind farm development proposals in the Ceded Area of the Yakama Nation. Locations of many of these proposed wind farms lie upon sacred ridges and mountains that recount the creation of the Yakama people. Yakama oral history describes how the proposed location of the Maiden Wind Farm was used by the Yakama people to explain the origin of different weather conditions and served as a dividing line between the north and south. Ancient Yakama trails traverse the Rattlesnake Hills and were used in the seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering of foods. The remnants of these trails are still clearly visible from different vantage points and extend northward from the Rattlesnake Hills to the Columbia River. Archaeological Resources present at Maiden Wind Farm include burials, Cairns, talus pits, quarries, and hunting and gathering camps.

The Yakama Nation is particularly concerned that the regional effects of these wind farms on flora and fauna have not been adequately studied. A recent review of Bonneville Power Administration New Transmission and Generation Project Maps indicate that the Yakama Nation could soon be completely encircled by wind power farms. Our fear is that this will significantly change the existing flight paths of migratory birds that return annually to the Yakama Reservation. These birds have a spiritual value for the Yakama people and have been part of Yakama culture from its creation. Should these migratory birds fail to return to the Yakama Reservation the Bonneville Power Administration would abrogate its trust responsibility to Article 3 of (12 Stat 951) by actively preventing the hunting of game upon the reserved lands of the Yakama Nation. A second concern of the Yakama Nation is the affect these wind power farms will have upon important foods and medicines. Little has been said by the BPA on the longevity of these wind power developments. In a recent site visit to the Maiden Wind Farm project area by representatives of the Yakama Nation it was observed that this project area had an abundance of traditional foods that would be destroyed should wind turbines be constructed upon them. There is currently little research to show how much time is required for these plants to re-establish themselves on disturbed lithosols. Whether these foods become locally extinct remains an open question. BPA would

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again abrogate its trust responsibility to the Yakama Nation should it actively prevent the Yakama Nation from the gathering of its traditional foods and medicines upon its ceded lands.


Presently the Yakama Nation is being asked to review several wind power proposals. These proposals are treated independent of each other, with only the local impacts of the projects being considered. As more and more wind farm projects are implemented in the future the cultural and natural resource impacts predicted for each individual project may greatly underestimate the combined impacts of many projects. Because of this the Yakama Nation will oppose all wind power projects as directed by Tribal Council Resolution T-129-95-06 passed on July 11, 1995; including the Maiden Farms proposal, until a regional approach to planning, impact assessment, and mitigation is completed.


The Yakama Nation feels that wind power can be an important source of clean energy for the region, especially if it can be used to lessen the burden now placed upon hydropower. We are asking that BPA and the wind power project proponents assist the Yakama Nation and other appropriate agencies in the development of this regional planning effort. A well-constructed plan will facilitate wind power projects in appropriate areas, protect and enhance the cultural and natural resources of the Region, and assist in cost-effective mitigation for those impacts, which cannot be avoided.

I would like to arrange a meeting between my staff and yours to begin the dialog leading to this regional planning effort. Please contact the Yakama Nation's Deputy Director of Natural Resources, Carroll Palmer, to confirm a meeting date and agenda. Carroll's phone number is (509) 865-5121. From the number of wind power proposals generated in the past year, it seems that this effort cannot begin too soon.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present our views. I look forward to a mutually productive planning effort regarding the development of this very important resource.

Sincerely,

  
Robert N. Wahpat  
Chairman  
Yakama Nation Tribal Council

  
Virgil Lewis, Sr.  
Chairman; Roads, Irrigation and Land Committee  
Yakama Nation Tribal Council

cc: Sonya Tetnowski, BPA Tribal and Public Affairs Manager  
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